





*POETRY*

*A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

*VOLUME XXXII*



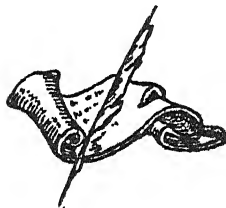
# oetry

## A Magazine of Verse

VOLUME XXXII

April-September, 1928

Edited by  
Harriet Monroe



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CHICAGO

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*Errata:*

Page 96—The article *Anthologies*, here printed in the wrong place, is not an editorial but a review. It should have followed the other reviews in the May number. *Brief Notices* (page 114) should also be classed under *Reviews*.

Page 152, line 20—for *ove* read *love*.

# Poetry.

## A Magazine of Verse

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*Whitman*

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As we stated in this place last March, our November prize awards will be more important this year than ever before. According to gifts for that purpose already provided, and pledges of others to come, we shall distribute twelve hundred dollars in prizes to poets, which is more than twice the amount at our command in any previous year. To the generous and appreciative donors of these prizes we beg to express the enthusiastic thanks of editors and poets.

For the Levinson Prize and the John Reed Memorial Prize we shall be indebted, as usual, to Mr. Salmon O. Levinson and Louise Bryant respectively. The other prizes will all be provided by new donors, mostly already on the above list, who, to our great regret, prefer to remain anonymous, with one exception recorded below.

The largest prize which POETRY has ever offered—five hundred dollars—is to be an Award of Honor to some American poet of high distinction or distinguished promise. Our usual Guarantor's Prize and Young Poet's Prize have been provided for this year by one of our most recent guarantors. Besides these, three prizes, of one hundred dollars each, are to be awarded under varying conditions. One of these three is the gift of a society of Chicago women, the Friends of American Writers. By desire of these ladies, this prize is to be awarded to a young poet who has not yet published a volume.

Another of these three is to be in honor of the late Walter Van Rensselaer Berry, whom Edmond Jaloux called "*un grand explorateur des paysages littéraires.*" This prize, as well as the third, is to be awarded at the discretion of the staff of POETRY.

The Award of Honor is not to be repeated, at least not by the same donor. And none of the new prizes above mentioned is provided for as an annual award. We hope that they may inspire new gifts or bequests to provide awards in the future.



# CONTENTS OF VOLUME XXXII

## VERSE

	PAGE
<i>Aldis, Dorothy</i>	
THREE POEMS:	
Spring, Flowers at Night, Words	18
<i>Allen, Effie Alger</i>	
TWO SAD SONGS.	
Bereavement	316
Song of the Hearse	317
<i>Arthur, Charlotte</i>	
For a Misty Day	19
<i>Austin, Mary</i>	
SOUTH-WESTERN SONGS.	
Sounds	123
Caller of Buffalo	124
Rio Abajo	125
Litany for New Mexico	126
<i>Bassett, Anna Flournoy</i>	
Farm Woman to the Earth	197
<i>Bialk, Elizabeth</i>	
Back o' the Yards	24
<i>Borden, Ellen</i>	
Songs I-IV	320
<i>Buller, Jessie Storrs</i>	
Garconne	259
<i>Carmer, Carl</i>	
INDUSTRIALS	
Riding the Carriage, Making the Mold	246
Song for Orleans County, New York	247
What the Black Driver Said, Afric	248
The Last White Man	249
<i>Carnevali, Emanuel</i>	
VISITING WINDS	179
Furnished Room Rhapsody	180
Sketch of Self	182
Night	184
<i>Cook, Harold Lewis</i>	
A SEQUENCE AND OTHERS:	
Spell Against Death I-V	144
The Island, Coward	147
Fugue	148
I Ain a Slow Thing	149
<i>Cooke, Le Baron</i>	
New England Spring	21
Provocative	321
<i>Croft-Cooke, Rupert</i>	
THREE POEMS:	
Downstairs	194
That Pueblo, Three Miles from Tilbury	195
<i>Davis, H L</i>	
PICO Y PALA:	
Steel Gang	299
Cloudy Day	307
Rivers to Children	303
<i>Dawson, Grace Strickler</i>	
Conversation	203

<i>Doughly, Leonard</i>	PAGE
Master François Villon Greets Death	86
<i>Driscoll, Louise</i>	
TWO POEMS	
Patronage	200
Here Lie	201
<i>Elmendorf, Mary J.</i>	
THREE STORIES	
Jasper	88
Beauty's the Thing	89
White Rose	90
<i>Emerson, Dorothy</i>	
SPARKS.	
The Stir, Note	257
<i>Emory, William Closson.</i>	
SOLIDS	
Thesis	254
Winter Song	255
<i>Fink, Robert O</i>	
Preferences	26
<i>Fujita, Jun.</i>	
PROJECTIONS	202
Morning Woods, Storm, Dried Whispers, Snow	202
<i>Gillespie, John</i>	
TWO LYRICS	
Song	20
Requiem	21
<i>Glaentzer, Helen</i>	
The Coming	265
<i>Glimes, Ellen</i>	
EQUATIONS	
Fourth Floor Back, Little Elegy	204
Armistice, Conqueror	205
<i>Herald, Leon Srabian</i>	
TWO CANICLES	
A Warv Woman	198
So to Me	199
<i>Hillyer, Robert</i>	
Pastorals I-V	310
<i>Hinton, Leonard</i>	
THREE MOODS IN LOVE	
Modern Marriage, Tribute	314
A Man to His World	315
<i>Hollowell, Grace Baer</i>	
LINES FROM DUST	
Summer Idyl	325
Song of the Yellow-green Willow	326
How Praise Her, Perhaps	327
City Dwelling, To My Step-son	328
<i>Hopkins, Ruth E</i>	
Morning	196
<i>Hoyt, Helen</i>	
POEMS FOR AMIS:	
Crescent Moon	239
A Woman and Mountains	240
At Daybreak I-II	241
Are You a Freesia?, Game, In the White Crib	242
First Walking, Portrait at Five, Dahlias	243, 244, 245

<i>Jennings, Leslie Nelson</i>	PAGE
Girders	250
<i>Kapstein, Israel James</i>	
New York Skyline	130
<i>Koenig, Eleanor C</i>	
The Grave Woman	206
<i>Kreymborg, Alfred</i>	
CAPE COD	
The Lost Sail, The Hand of Understanding	192
<i>Mansfield, Margery</i>	
This Is New England	305
<i>Marco, Angela</i>	
Marble Yard	87
<i>Masters, Edgar Lee</i>	
TWO POEMS.	
Peterkin	119
I Will Stand Guard	121
TWO LYCHEE NUTS	
Yee Lem of Keokuk, Wah Tom and Black Mag	308
<i>Mastin, Florence Ripley</i>	
Hearing the Frogs	85
<i>Monro, Harold</i>	
PALE ADVENTURE.	
Journey to Reclaim a Ghost	75
Rumor	77
<i>Moore, Virginia</i>	
TWO POEMS	
Old Age	322
Justified Bird	323
<i>Morrow, Elizabeth</i>	
Quatrain	315
<i>Newton, Katherine</i>	
Inarticulate	25
<i>Nichols, Leonora</i>	
Nocturne	251
<i>Nolle, Julius M</i>	
Man and Woman	318
<i>North, Jessica Nelson</i>	
BOUQUET	
Mathematical, Creation	188
Truth	189
To Betsy	190
The Mother	191
<i>Olson, E. James</i>	
SOFT MUSIC	
Last Night	81
Towers of Sleep	82
<i>O'Neil, George</i>	
NO SHELTER.	
Soporific	15
Huntsman's Rouse, Homage	16
<i>Pearce, Helen</i>	
TWO POEMS.	
Emily Bronte	136
Sonnet	137
<i>Post, Mary Brinker</i>	
Summer in the Garden	324

<i>Powers, Jessica</i>		PAGE
Like Kildeers Crying		139
<i>Riggs, Lynn</i>		
GILDED CAVERN		
Hour After Dawn, Charger		260
Bastinado		261
The Wolves, The Golden Cockerel		262
Portrait of a Peer, Statement		263
The Fountain		264
<i>Roe, Robert</i>		
THREE POEMS		
Blacksmith's Song		27
Another Immoral Season		28
Receipt		29
Aesthete to His Love		309
<i>Sage, Joan</i>		
Mirage		135
<i>Sampson, Harriet</i>		
Venice		134
<i>Seiffert, Marjorie Allen</i>		
Noah's Ark		1
To Certain Contemporaries		309
<i>Stevens, Frances</i>		
Earth		313
<i>Stillman, E. Clark</i>		
TWO POEMS		
Crows, Ground		138
<i>Taggard, Genevieve</i>		
Dilemma of the Elm		256
<i>Tarafa See Tietjens, Eunice</i>		
<i>Terrell, R. Marshall</i>		
Los Angeles		132
<i>Tessimond, A. S. J.</i>		
Lines		22
<i>Tietjens, Eunice</i>		
The Bedouin Praises His Camel (From the Arabic of <i>Tarafa</i> )		186
<i>Turbyfill, Mark</i>		
ABSOLUTELY AND SINCERFLY*		
I—Station J-A-Z-Z Broadcasting		61
II—Like a Fish		63
III—Our American Mercury		65
IV—The Incarnation of Romance		66
V—Judas Jazz		69
<i>Turner, Juanita</i>		
For Those Who Would Be Safe		319
<i>Uschold, Maud E.</i>		
Oak		193
<i>Vestal, Stanley</i>		
PRAIRIE PICTOGRAPHS		
Prairie Dog, Rabbit, Burrowing Owl		252
Rattlesnake, Spider, Buffalo		253
<i>Walton, Eda Lou</i>		
THE NESTING MIND		
Indeterminate Road, The Path of Glory		140
Mea Culpa		141
The Black Swan		142
Moonrise		143

<i>Weber, Lee Andrew</i>	PAGE
Undine	258
<i>White, Grace Hoffman</i>	
April	17
<i>Wylie, Elnor</i>	
TWO POEMS	
Address to My Soul	78
The Heart Upon the Sleeve	79
TWO POEMS	
Lament for Glasgerrion	128
Last Supper	129
<i>Zaturensky, Marya</i>	
DREAM PLACES	
The Secret Garden	83
Nostalgia	85

## PROSE

Books and Tomorrow	H. M.	32
The Poetry of Paul Valéry	Harold J. Salemsen	36
REVIEWS		
A Poet-Philosopher	Agnes Lee Free	41
<i>The Bare Hills</i> , by Yvor Winters		
A New Poet	H. M.	47
<i>Hale's Pond and Other Poems</i> , by James Whaler		
Chiseled Song	H. M.	50
<i>The Pale Woman</i> , by Sara Bard Field		
Celtic-Slavic Beasts	Morton Dauwen Zabel	53
<i>Creatures</i> , by Padraic Colum		
Brief Notices		55
<i>The Butterflies of Taiwan and other Fantasies</i> , by Janet B. McGovern,		
<i>Penny Show</i> , by Mary Carolyn Davies, <i>The Fall and Other Poems</i> ,		
by Evan Morgan		
Eastward Bound	J. N.	92
In Florida	H. M.	95
Anthologies (This should have been printed as a review)	Morton D. Zabel	96
REVIEWS		
Fugitives	Yvor Winters	102
<i>Fugitives: An Anthology of Verse</i>		
The Foam of the Wave	Marie Luhrs	108
<i>Selected Poems</i> , by Walter de la Mare		
Another Tristan	Morton Dauwen Zabel	109
<i>Tristan and Isolde</i> , by John Masefield		
A Sonneteer	H. M.	111
<i>Sonnets for Cressida and Red Skeletons</i> , by Harry Crosby		
CORRESPONDENCE		
Visual Poetry	Philip Conrad	112
Brief Notices		114
<i>Bats in the Belfry</i> , by Lance Sieveking, <i>Selected Lyrics</i> , by Anchia Josephine Burr, <i>Prophet of a Nameless God</i> , by Joseph Kinnmont Hart		
Again New York	H. M.	150
REVIEWS		
Mr. Benet's Selected Poems	J. N.	159
<i>Man Possessed</i> , by William Rose Benet		

	PAGE
Young Charleston	H M 162
<i>Sea-drinking Cities</i> , by Josephine Pinckney	
At the Cross-roads	Horace Gregory 165
<i>The Seventh Hill</i> , by Robert Hillyer	
An Impassioned Realist	Morton Dauwen Zabel 167
<i>Sleep Ascent</i> , by Jean Starr Untermeyer	
Fresh Shoots from the Tree	Marion Strobel 169
<i>The Evergreen Tree</i> , by Kathleen Millay	
Delicate Echoes	Morton Dauwen Zabel 171
<i>Floodgate</i> , by David McCord	
CORRESPONDENCE	
Suggestions from Dr Chubb	Elmer Chubb, LL D 173
Meredith as a Poet	H M 210
REVIEWS	
Poems in Silverpoint	H M 217
<i>Color of Water</i> , by Marjorie Mecker	
A Deflected Romanticist	Horace Gregory 221
<i>The King of Spain</i> , by Maxwell Bodenheim	
Between the Lines	Pearl Anderson Sherry 222
<i>The Wheel in Midsummer</i> , by Janet Lewis	
By Force of Will	J N 224
<i>Burning Bush</i> , by Louis Untermeyer	
Prolific	Margery Mansfield 225
<i>A Stranger in Heaven</i> , by Harold Vinal	
More Sonnets	M D Z 227
<i>Nocturnes and Autumnals</i> , by David Morton	
James Thomson	Morton Dauwen Zabel 229
<i>Poems of James Thomson</i> , "B V." Ed by Gordon Hall Gerould	
Rossetti	H. M 270
Vers-libre in Full Bloom—I	Stanley Burnshaw 277
REVIEWS.	
A Comic Tragedian	J N 282
<i>Animula Vagula</i> , and <i>Guinea-fowl and Other Poultry</i> , by Leonard Bacon	
Overloaded	Morton Dauwen Zabel 284
<i>Sky-Rider</i> , by Wade Oliver	
Sad Stories	Edith Franklin Wyatt 286
<i>Wind Out of Betelgeuse</i> , by Margaret Tod Ritter	
Stars Out of Range	Margery Mansfield 288
<i>Heavenly Bodies</i> , by Oliver Jenkins	
Classicism Defended	Nelson Antrim Crawford 289
<i>The Classical Tradition in Poetry</i> , by Gilbert Murray	
The "Voice" and the "Singer"	H M 330
Vers-libre in Full Bloom—II	Stanley Burnshaw 334
REVIEWS.	
Serene and Secure	H. M 341
<i>Outcrop</i> , by Abbie Huston Evans	
Anti-Puritan	Margery Mansfield 345
<i>The Joy Ride and Other Poems</i> , by Warren Gilbert	
A Prize Poem	Morton Dauwen Zabel 348
<i>The City</i> , by Ruth Manning Sanders	
From a Small Place	H. M. 350
<i>Songs of Infancy and Other Poems</i> , by Mary Britton Miller	
A Mountain Folk-play	Morton Dauwen Zabel 352
<i>The Gobbler of God</i> , by Percy Mackaye	
News Notes	57, 115, 174, 234, 295, 354
Books Received	60, 117, 177, 238, 298, 358

*POETRY*

*A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

*VOLUME XXXII*





POETRY is about the only indispensable periodical which American culture is producing.  
*Raymond Knister*

Vol. XXXII

No. VI

# POETRY for SEPTEMBER 1928

Pico y Pala	<i>H. L. Davis</i>	299
Steel Gang—Cloudy Day—Rivers to Children		
This Is New England	<i>Margery Mansfield</i>	305
Two Lychee Nuts	<i>Edgar Lee Masters</i>	308
Yee Lem of Keokuk—Wah Tom and Black Mag		
Aesthete to His Love	<i>Robert Roe</i>	309
To Certain Contemporaries	<i>Marjorie Allen Seiffert</i>	309
Pastorals I-V	<i>Robert Hillyer</i>	310
Earth	<i>Frances Stevens</i>	313
Three Moods in Love	<i>Leonard Hinton</i>	314
Modern Marriage—Tribute—A Man to His World		
Quatrain	<i>Elizabeth Morrow</i>	315
Two Sad Songs	<i>Effie Alger Allen</i>	316
Bereavement—Song of the Hearse		
Man and Woman	<i>Julius M. Nolte</i>	318
For Those Who Would Be Safe	<i>Juanita Turner</i>	319
Songs I-IV	<i>Ellen Borden</i>	320
Provocative	<i>I. e. Baron Cooke</i>	321
Two Poems	<i>Virginia Moore</i>	322
Old Age—Justified Bird		
Summer in the Garden	<i>Mary Brinker Post</i>	324
Lines from Dust	<i>Grace Baer Hollowell</i>	325
Summer Idyl—Song of the Yellow-green Willow—How Praise		
Her—Perhaps—City Dwelling—To My Step-son		
The "Voice" and the "Singer"	<i>H. M.</i>	330
Vers-libre in Full Bloom II	<i>Stanley Burnshaw</i>	334
Reviews:		
Serene and Secure	<i>H. M.</i>	341
Anti-Puritan	<i>Margery Mansfield</i>	345
A Prize Poem	<i>Morton Dauwen Zabel</i>	348
From a Small Place	<i>H. M.</i>	350
A Mountain Folk Play	<i>Morton Dauwen Zabel</i>	352
News Notes and Books Received		354, 358

Manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope. Otherwise we must decline hereafter to return them (except to poets living abroad) and they will be destroyed.

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SEPTEMBER 1928

PICO Y PALA

STEEL • GANG

THE boss came over and called us out a little bit after  
dark.

He said, "I don't want you boys to think your work ain't  
up to the mark,

But Paddy Duffy goes bragging around, the steel his Mex  
can lay—

All how that spiggoty gang spikes down two miles and a  
half a day,

And how two miles and a half is more than any man's gang  
can tap.

So I want you men to help me out to make him shut his  
yap.

No matter what record a Mex gang makes, I claim white  
men can trim it.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Then, for the day that followed that, they offered us  
double jack  
Because we had all lost heart in the work, and they wanted  
to bring us back.  
So we worked that day for their double time, and then  
pulled up and quit.  
The spig gang stayed and finished the job after us white  
men lit.

CLOUDY DAY

Cloudy day.  
The spiking-crew  
Pounded blunt spike-wedges  
Into the new  
Tough-grained ties;  
Crouched, wrenched away  
Their fifteen-pound sledges,  
Staggering; and threw  
Them high again—  
Big dark men  
With sweat-burned eyes.  
  
While vehemently  
The deep-backed older men,  
Grunting, slashed  
Their spikes half-weeping,  
A softer-fleshed tireless  
Youngster spiked with them,

Who stepped gently;  
Who drew his hammer  
Not past his shoulder,  
And drove with the rhythm  
One breathes in, sleeping.

Cloudy day,  
Cloudy night.  
Up-track, old timbers  
Burn down to ashes.  
Though their embers  
Slipping, twisting,  
Flake away  
And fall from sight,  
That youth's grace  
Stays, persisting  
Still, to keep  
Me from sleep:  
New, proud, gay.

RIVERS TO CHILDREN

We rivers, we torrents,  
We heavy-backed waters  
Burned out of the green ocean,  
Came, clouds, from the plunging  
Sea restless as flame.

One-willed and unchanging,  
We rained and flowed westward.  
We crossed these same meadows.  
We touched and knew children  
Like you; not the same.

Where are those children  
Whose fields we then rained in?  
We wet their brown fingers,  
And grasses about them.  
We rained in their eyes.

Where? . . . Surely we waters,  
We deathless, recurrent  
In leeching this compost,  
Have knowledge whenever  
A living thing dies.

No grave could have slipped us.  
How have they hidden then?  
Where are they hidden—  
Neither on earth, nor  
Under the earth?

And you, shall it come to you,  
Children, and teach you  
How to evade us?  
Even your eyes?  
Even your mirth?

*H. L. Davis*

## THIS IS NEW ENGLAND

This is New England, past my heart's believing!  
In sleep, or in a picture, I have seen  
These white and oblong houses, shuttered with green,  
And the high elms with vaulted branches weaving  
Over the still street. For strange they are, and past be-  
lieving.

Not mine these hills of blue, birch-striped like shadowed  
snow,

Not mine the porchless towns, for long ago  
Blood that was mine  
Left for wider rivers flowing,  
For deeper soil, hot roads, and a song in the going.

The Great Valley was shouting: "I wait to be crossed  
Only by those who are gladly lost  
Each in each, and all in me.  
Come who are free,  
Come who are young, come eager to be men,  
But never think your soul will wait, self-complete again."

Two stood where one man should be,  
(The winter bitter, the land accursed)  
And eye looked into eye of kin.  
And did the best go, or the worst?  
O drama of scorn and envy and grief!  
(That was New England, past belief!).

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

I rode through Indiana, and the ragged hedges cried  
In whimsy gipsy beauty,  
"Your father lived here, and your father died."  
My feet went scuffing through the singing sand  
Of Michigan. I understand  
The quick-caught breath and the tears in my throat,  
The wave-ribbed shore and the wild bird's note.  
I am child of these. Yet it is known  
New England never loses—quite—its own.

Her daughter still, I am returned  
To hard hills where the first fires burned,  
To find mine ancient kin, at last,  
Incredibly here still,  
Walled in by the demoniac  
Wail of the whippoorwill.

I do not ask the porches to be wide  
Upon their hearts—  
The soil is stubborn and the folk have pride;  
And when the bowl is empty,  
The soul in duress finds  
Nobility in staying in behind the doors and blinds.  
But must we stand here, looking each at each,  
With slow embarrassed poverty of speech?

Their eyes have a trick of looking back  
Into themselves; they are compact  
Of something I cannot surmise.



O strangely quiet hands and eyes,  
And low deliberate voice! Reproof  
To my unquiet even lies  
In the chastely drooping line of roof.

How can I pry the thoughts apart,  
Or look within the close-locked heart  
Of two gray sisters as they sit  
Behind their door when lights are lit;  
Or know the thoughts they do not say  
When they clear the cups away!

Yet in sleep I hear the sound  
Of the last echo of their talk,  
And feel beneath my feet the ground  
As I go down their kitchen walk—  
Or did, a hundred years ago!  
The same low roof, the lights within, the tall elm's droop  
and the dusk-bird grieving. . . .

I almost know, yet do not know;  
I almost am, yet cannot be. . . .  
This is New England, past believing . . .  
This is New England! . . .

*Margery Mansfield*

TWO LYCHEE NUTS

YEE LEM OF KEOKUK

After Yee Lem of Keokuk  
Had been in New York long time  
Yet Wei ask him if city and East  
Are not much different from country and West.  
"Yes," say Yee Lem, "different,  
Like head and tail of donkey are different;  
One is head, one tail,  
Both are donkey."

WAH TOM AND BLACK MAG

Hi Ho left Golden Dragon  
And went to work in an oyster-room  
Down near Wall Street,  
Where bank clerks come for oysters.  
When Hi Ho hear that Black Mag,  
Who married Wah Tom,  
Had left him and taken the furniture  
And all the money, he say:  
"What of it? Oyster work like hell  
To make shell for home,  
And make pearl for picture in home.  
Then what happens?—  
Shell is thrown away, pearl is grabbed,  
And bank clerk swallow oyster."

*Edgar Lee Masters*

## AESTHETE TO HIS LOVE

If you were marble!  
If you were paint!  
If you were rhythm set to melody,  
Or form set to words!

Oh, you are beautiful, when I look at you!  
But when I approach you  
I detect the faint taint of decay—  
A perfume of corruption,  
An odor, disgusting, of life!  
Why are you not art?

•

*Robert Roe*

## TO CERTAIN CONTEMPORARIES

Scream, cold birds, you are free  
Of summer! Or fly proudly and silently!  
Your singing days are past, you have forsaken  
The empty nest—nothing can hurt you now  
But the cold wind. Only the hard sky  
Shall smooth the chilly feathers of your breast—  
Now there is only one  
Cry in your heart.

*Marjorie Allen Seiffert*

PASTORALS

I

I watched the pond without lifting my eyes:  
Shadow of leaves on shadow skies;  
Scarves of color twining through haze  
And a bright bird flying with wings ablaze;  
A bird flying over, the day in flight,  
And I watched him pass without lifting my eyes.  
It was enough—the shadow of delight,  
The shadow of a bird over shadow skies.

The first white star unbound her hair;  
The water trembled, and she was there  
Setting her foot on the darkening mirror  
While round her the trees of night leaned nearer,  
They gathering dark, she gathering light,  
And I watched the pond without lifting my eyes.  
It was enough—the shadow of night,  
The shadow of a star in shadow skies.

II

Half-way across the bridge of ivory  
The sultan's daughter leaned far down to look  
Into the braided waters of the brook,  
Flecked with white petals from the apple tree.  
Her tears dimpled the stream,\* her shoulders shook

With sobbing as she thought of the dark sea  
Where the familiar orchard brook and she  
Would meet so soon, and neither know the other.  
She wept and called in vain to her dead mother,  
She begged the gods to blast her where she stood,  
Or stay the rapid flow of time, or smother  
Her heart before she yield her maidenhood.  
Then, as none answered, with a childish scream  
She leaped into the waters of the stream . . .  
But they were shallow.

All this was a dream.

III.

Always more riches, more enjoyment, more  
Of everything the world can briefly give,  
Though through your avid hands as through a sieve  
Beauties unnumbered and unnoticed pour.  
You chase the wind, but you are fugitive  
From the great quiet at the whirlwind's core,  
And spendthrift of life's measurable store.  
You have not purchased the mere right to live.

There is a vacant seat beside me here  
Where you may rest and watch the season change;  
Form, color, tone, mysterious or clear,  
In swift variety though never strange,  
Where if one beauty wholly be revealed  
Life would have yielded all she has to yield.

IV

The tracks stretch into fog forever,  
Lifeless but for the iron humming  
That thrills them when the train is coming.

The long rails hum, the air is roaring,  
Black smoke into the grey fog pouring.  
Hundreds of faces behind glass,  
Like fish in an aquarium,  
In agitated flashes pass  
And end. And now the rails are dumb  
The whirling cinders sting and choke  
The man left gasping in the smoke.

If parallels should intersect,  
Euclid, a demonstrated liar,  
Would crumble, and the western flier  
Ungeometrically be wrecked.

Outcast in fog from sun and sky,  
I watched the western flier go by,  
And I have missed my train forever.

V

Now on the idle pond  
Slowly the fallen leaf  
Drifts with its double.  
Crescent from prow to poop,

Curving with curves of gold,  
Galley of silence.  
How have our pomps decayed!  
Frail is the royal barge,  
Autumn the cargo.

*Robert Hillyer*

## EARTH

Earth is horned and young. Earth is Pan asleep.  
In the dark pastures of his brain  
He counts eternally the hurdling sheep.  
He puffs up snores that spin a weather-vane  
In the high spaces, where the great cock God  
Shifts to the windy outlet of Earth's dreams.  
He dreams of strength and wars. Over his broad  
And sunburnt back, tremolos of rapture run. He steams  
With sweaty thoughts of wrestling in the skies.  
He pants and twitches after starry blows,  
And shakes the cities off like tickling flies.

Earth never wakes. Earth only knows  
A vast sleep, and under him a windy bed,  
And dreams that blow like whirlwinds in his head.

*Frances Stevens*

THREE MOODS IN LOVE

MODERN MARRIAGE

There are so many little weedy loves  
We dare not leave to flourish in the sun!  
This passion—do we know it for a rose?  
A time may come when each of us will smile  
A little wryly at the other's name.  
But, looking further—give me your brave eyes—  
In the fag-end and bitter chill of years  
We may be glad again, remembering this  
That now we are afraid of. So, my love  
(You see I write the phrase out firm and bold),  
You then may want a scribbled bit of verse  
To tuck within the circle of the ring  
We so distrust, identifying both,  
And linking souvenirs, as such things are done.  
O my dear heart, take this, for such a time.

TRIBUTE

You are a candle, burned  
To a white blot of memory,  
With forgetfulness closing in.  
  
You are a poignant hour  
Full of pain that days will vanquish,  
Full of beauty that doubts will dim.



You are a lilac bloom,  
A color that fades to darkness,  
A fragrance fallen asleep.

A MAN TO HIS WORLD

So: you have pinched the last bud from this twig  
That is my life among so many lives;  
Only, this hung so low your fingers twitched  
To pluck the promise from it, bud by bud.  
You see, my world, you are a woman, come  
To stand beneath the tree of all your trysts.  
You fret now this too intimate stem and that,  
Cruel and careless, with an idle mind  
Deliberating kisses old and new.

My world, you do not much disturb the tree—  
We are too many branches. Neither can  
Your pestilent fingers ever baffle spring.

*Leonard Hinton*

QUATRAIN

In night's brave darkness lovely actions flower,  
Red with our courage, purple with our pride,  
Only to shrivel in one shining hour,  
As Peter's boasting with the cock-crow died.

*Elizabeth Morrow*

TWO SAD SONGS

BEREAVEMENT

I have no tears for grief.  
Like corn stubble I am left  
Stiff and dry and still,  
A stalk bereft.

I lean on air,  
Having no memory of that or this,  
Nor any conceit,  
Nor any demand,  
Beyond this inhibiting paralysis  
Of will,  
These somnambulant fears,  
With which to win the copious bliss  
Of tears.

This numbness is a vise  
Clamped on my sentient being.  
I seem to be seeing  
The lips of others nice  
With syllables that move  
In an old appointed groove.  
But somehow I do not hear;  
There is only the sound  
Of distant oceans in my ear—  
Waves, solemn and profound,

Breaking on a far shore;  
This—and nothing more.

I have no tears,  
No tears for grief.

SONG OF THE HEARSE

The somber black hearse  
Crawls solemnly by,  
And sings to the listener:  
“Hark, you that sigh!  
Life is a pin-point  
Stuck in death’s sky,  
Holding the firmament up;  
But I—  
I am Death’s shadow.  
None may flee the falling sky;  
All must lie, must die,  
All die!  
Young and old, low and high,  
Mine—I take them  
And encase them,  
To lie unfinished, incomplete!  
Idle hands, idle feet—  
Incomplete!  
Why?

*Effie Alger Allen*

MAN AND WOMAN

“There is light in the eyes of a woman,  
O wanderer, bound for the sea;  
And the gleam in your own eye kindles—  
Oh come, make a mistress of me!”

“But it kindles to answer a sky light  
That gleams thousand-eyed at the sea  
In the night, when a woman sleepeth,  
So the stars be a mistress for me.”

“There’s a swell in the breast of a woman,  
O wanderer, faring to sea; <sup>c</sup>  
And your curls, they are soft to lie there—  
Oh come, make a mistress of me!”

“What’s the heave of the breast of a woman  
To the swell and the heave of the sea  
With her million breasts rising and falling?  
Nay, the ocean’s a mistress for me.”

“There’s a kiss on the lips of a woman,  
O wanderer, seeking the sea,  
That is soft and yet stings to desire—  
Oh come, make a mistress of me!”

“No kiss is as soft as the wind’s kiss  
When she blows from the south of the sea

*Julius M. Nolte*

With the salt of her warm lips stinging—  
So the wind be a mistress for me!”

*Julius M. Nolte*

## FOR THOSE WHO WOULD BE SAFE

Build up your house more solid than a rock  
Upon whose stubborn back the pitiless years  
Have laid their sorrow. Bolt the panes and lock  
Yourself within. Not death, nor song, nor tears  
May break your solitude. •A fire in the grate  
Is better than in the heart; and so no more  
Will wonder come and question at your gate,  
Or beat with eager hands upon the door.

Now troubled ash, too long forgot for weeping,  
In the cool earth the valiant and the mad  
Who sought a star have found their peace in sleeping.  
And you will be inside, too safe, too glad  
To know when in the moon, in the tall grasses,  
Beauty shall walk and mock you as she passes.

*Juanita Turner*

SONGS

I

The golden arms of dawn have thrown  
The sun into the sky;  
I watched, and never have I known  
A ball to go so high.

The arms of dawn may throw their ball  
As high as there is height,  
And know that it will always fall  
Into the arms of night.

II

I have walked alone by day,  
I have watched a bird take flight,  
And have wished that so I might,  
Sometimes, push the world away.

I have walked by night alone,  
I have watched the rain descend,  
Felt its fingers, like a friend,  
Touch me softly on my own.

III

I hold the mirrors of my dreams and see,  
In each, my own face looking back at me;  
And every mirror shows it differently.

I drop the mirrors of my dreams and bless  
The dawn, for then, grown dull and visionless,  
They splinter on the floor of wakefulness.

IV

I have felt grief  
For trees that have bled  
Their last red leaf  
On earth's death-bed.

Can it be true  
You have died that way,  
To be born anew •  
Some fair spring day?

*Ellen Borden*

PROVOCATIVE

An intangible haze  
Strays  
Between me and the dream  
I seem  
Almost to capture in a phrase.

• • • *Le Baron Cooke*

TWO POEMS

OLD AGE

The old old man  
And the eucalyptus tree  
Are shedding leaves  
Quietly.

It's easy to live  
And easier to die  
After you learn  
The reason why.

Close to the earth:  
With scarcely a sound  
The old old tree  
Bends to the ground;

And the old old man  
Hour on hour  
Waters the bean  
And the trumpet-flower,

Trims the mimosa  
And digs at the root  
Of the blue and starry  
Primula-shoot;

Nor hurries the little  
Soft field mouse,



Nor frightens the lizard  
Out of his house. . . .

The old old man  
And the eucalyptus tree  
Are making friends  
With eternity.

JUSTIFIED BIRD

There's no reproach to a bird,  
Whatever he does is right:  
There's no mistake to be heard  
In his crying by night;  
He flies for the joy of flying,  
He lights for the moment's whim,  
And when he is ready for dying  
The earth approves of him.

Home, to the feathered breast  
Of her with the habit of song—  
Home, to the neat-woven nest  
Where the hours of sleep are long,  
And eggs, at a waking word,  
Hatch suddenly into a bird.

Essential color comes through  
The medium of his wing:  
Where did they mix the blue?  
What mind imagined the ring

Of rust that circles the neck,  
And feet familiar with dew,  
And yellow no sable could check,  
And beak unerringly true?

His proper abode is the air  
And the wild vagaries of light,  
Whatever he does is fair,  
Whatever he feels is right.  
Careless or wise or absurd,  
There's no reproach to a bird.

*Virginia Moore*

## SUMMER IN THE GARDEN

It is sweet to lie on the green grass near flowers—  
Marigolds and asters that butterflies drift over.  
It is sweet to lie through an afternoon's hours—  
Bees' hum and flies' drone and smell of clover.

Let your heart be quiet in the green shade of trees—  
Summer and flowers are enough for your needs.  
Gold sun and kind shade and the brown bees—  
Summer is gracious when the heart heeds.

Summer is a drowsy time of long golden quiet,  
When sleek-bodied humming-birds to the garden come;  
Take your empty heart—fill it with summer's riot—  
Clover-sweet and flies' drone and slow bee-hum.

*Mary Brinker Post*

# LINES FROM DUST

## SUMMER IDYL

By turns each honey-gold head  
Of wheat is bowing,  
Allowing one symphonic interval  
For rest;  
Allowing one short stiff  
Dusky-gold hair to sweep some tiny  
Invisible violin—  
Some elfin summer wind idly sweeping—  
As thin-skinned, satin-skinned,  
Golden-skinned islanders sweep  
Their guitars,  
With infinitely easy  
Infinitely beautiful  
Melancholy  
Wrists.

Idly sweeping as the yellow moonlight  
Pale above the cotton-fields, that fear  
The brisk and silken  
Yellow-fingered hands  
Idly sweeping on . . .

By turns each honey-gold head  
Of wheat is bowing, and allowing one  
Symphonic interval,

One melancholy yellow interval,  
For rest.

SONG OF THE YELLOW-GREEN WILLOW

My love sleeps long,  
With never a song  
To brighten the day:  
My love that used all the day  
Sweeping the dusty room,  
Her broom heavy with light—  
Lightly sweeping, as now her  
Tresses sweep the floor,  
Heavy with gold and sleep.

But the dusty blue wood  
Remains in its dust and its blue  
Undisturbed, and my love  
Sleeps long.

I fear the blue casement  
Will nevermore open  
The orange eyes of my love,  
Nevermore waken, nevermore weep.  
They are blank, and stare  
In their sleep.

HOW PRAISE HER

Sing her no song  
Of earth or street  
Or sun—sing her no song.

In no long sweeping  
Undulations praise her—  
Savage suns or tender  
Laces praise her.

Lithe and lovely elm, in no  
Lightest whisper  
Praise her.

Let the silent trembling  
White lips of her  
Children praise her.

PERHAPS

Sometimes it seems to me  
That one day I shall be  
A higher form, perfectly  
Patterned, crisp and cool—  
A squeaking kingly cabbage  
Rising silverly from the earth  
In the frosty fall!

CITY DWELLING

Crowded city dwelling,  
Shielded from the sun  
By an imported cotton  
Art-cretonne, centering  
A bird that never  
Sings, a flower that never  
Blooms . . . sometimes it comes to me  
Your heated dusted rooms  
Are not so sweet and neat as the dusty  
Grave—loose, natural, velvety,  
Cool-circling the bright flower that blooms  
At last.

TO MY STEPSON

Almost it feared to seek—  
My small brown gipsy hand  
Feared to seek your own,  
That was so childish and so fair.

Almost it feared the least flutter  
Toward the darkness of your hair,  
That shone so set, so dear, so fair.

Almost the mildness of my yellow gaze  
Feared to follow the beauty resting  
Hectic, delicate, upon a cheek a shade

Less pitifully Greek, a shade less delicate,  
For the bronze shadow of a small  
Brown maternal hand,  
A hand that scarcely knew  
Its own gentleness.

Almost the mildness of my yellow gaze  
Feared to gaze upon your own;  
But after waiting, fearing, long alone—  
O happiness like fear!—your love  
Rushing to me like a song,  
Breathlessly,  
With only strength to rest and whisper  
On my heart—long, oh long—  
“Dearest mother,  
Mother dear!”

*Grace Baer Hollowell*

## COMMENT

## THE "VOICE" AND THE "SINGER"

IN sending out the *Announcement of the \$500 Poetry Book Award*, recently won by Gladys Oaks, the committee appended "a declaration of the standard on which the contest was conducted." The following paragraph from this declaration raises a question which invites discussion:

Those who have inaugurated this contest and contributed to the prize award hope that the judges, in considering the manuscripts before them, will agree with the proposition that it is more desirable to encourage a poet who is a Voice than one who is a Singer. The distinction touches upon a number of questions having to do with poetic expression. In the first place it would seem that it is a distinction between talent and something more than talent—between the work of a settled and matured individuality and one that is awake and still curious to explore new regions of human experience. In the latter there is always the possibility of seeing and hoping for a still larger development, in the former one can assume the growth is over. The poet who is a Voice is one who has something to say, or is at least trying to say something; the poet who is a Singer simply repeats, with the color of his own personality, the usual pleasantries and conflicts of human emotion. We may enjoy and delight in the Singer, but we hope to gain new perspectives from the Voice. Prevailing fashions in American poetry seem to demand that the poet say as little as possible. This should be discouraged.

Accepting the above definition of "a poet who is a Voice" as a new version of the old phrase, "a poet with a message," we should like to stress the rather obvious point that the Voice, however wise, may as well remain silent, and the message forever unuttered, unless the poet in question is also a Singer. In other words, the most im-



portant thing, in poetry as in the other arts, is not what the poet has to say, but whether, having something to say, some thought or emotion to put into words, he can manage to say it with style, magic, beauty, so that the world will stop, look, listen—and remember.

Without this magic of genius, the Voice will be, in the ears of the world, merely a shout or a cry, never a poem; while the merest young thoughtless Singer, trilling a love-song like a bird on a bough, may present us with immortal beauty.

In our opinion, what any such prize-jury, or any critic of poetry, should look for is not the intelligence to discern, or even the imagination to conceive some detail of the truth and beauty for which the world is always yearning, but the sheer ability to create it—

to give to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Granted this ability, then the more the better of intelligence and imagination which the poet may put into his product. The greatest poets have put into their products a certain magnificence of life—that was the message of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and even of the author of the *Book of Job* or the *Song of Solomon* or the *Bhagavad-Gita*. And that is also essentially the message, not unworthily uttered, of some of our modern Voices who are, like those great ones of the past, also Singers. \*

The fact that certain of the poets above-mentioned interpreted the magnificence of life through some religious or

philosophical system would never have made poets of them if they had not been born Singers. In each case, the Voice was the voice of a group, the supreme utterance of the thought and aspiration of all the thinking and aspiring human souls who were fixed in the poet's place and epoch and thence were reaching out toward the infinite. But the poet's song was his own—his manner of embodying and presenting in beauty the wisdom of his age was the inexplicable personal magic, the genius, through which alone that wisdom survives.

One wonders how the committees would class certain poets. They could hardly deny, for example, that Miss Millay is a Singer; her poetry being unquestionably, in the highest sense, song. But she certainly does not "simply repeat, with the color of her own personality, the usual pleasantries and conflicts of human emotion." She is also a Voice: her one-act tragedy, *Aria da Capo*, is the most profound, complete, and altogether superb reaction to the World War which any poet has as yet given us; and her Euclid sonnet penetrates to the beauty and grandeur of that ancient science which underlies all modern scientific achievement and aspiration. Does the committee think it safe, in this case (or in any case), to "assume that the growth is over"?

So we do not agree with the Committee that the distinction between "the poet who is a Voice and the poet who is a Singer" (as they define these terms) is "a distinction between talent and something more than talent." We think,

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

its splendid romance and vitality; and to entitle them to more contemporary honors—and emoluments—than our critics, and the public in general, seem inclined to bestow.

H. M.

### VERS-LIBRE IN FULL BLOOM

#### *A Note on the Prosody of Andre Spire*

#### II

“Many-voiced” might characterize the music of Spire’s poems; a more inclusive term would have to be used to describe the breadth of subject matter which this music sings. Few other modern poets have attempted so wide a range, and certainly no other writer of vers-libre since Whitman has dared to use his medium for such a seemingly endless catalog of things.

Even the very simplest of Spire’s lyrical poems moves with the sea-like motion of his line. And these simple poems seem to gather some strange power because of their music. *L’Oiseau, Oh! n’inventons plus de systèmes!* illustrate the range even within this subdivision. *Ce n’est pas toi*, with its varied waves and the ebb at the end, might be taken as typical:

Ce n’est pas toi que j’attendais  
Depuis toujours.  
Ce n’est pas toi que je voyais  
Dans mes rêves d’adolescent  
Et de jeune homme.  
Ce n’est pas toi que je cherchais  
Dans les jolis corps que j’aimais.  
Je ne t’ai pas vue

Descendre la colline dans un rayonnement.  
Nous cheminions.

Nos chemins se sont rencontrés brusquement,  
Et nos mains se sont étendues.

Les jours ont fui  
Ma bien-aimée.

The more sustained lyrical poems, attempting more ambitious things, carry this same wave-like motion. But often the calm in these contemplative poems reduces the motion to an undertone, giving it the semblance of ripples of rhythm. *Baisers* or *Nuages* or a dozen other poems might serve to illustrate this. These lines are from *Baisers*:

Vents, qui avez, tant de fois, caressé mon visage,  
Quels baisers, aujourd'hui, m'apportez vous?  
Sur quels temples, sur quels corps vous êtes-vous caressés au passage?  
Où avez-vous cueilli ces étranges odeurs,  
Ou d'amour ou de mort?

Quel rayon aspirant quelles eaux a formé votre souffle,  
Pour sécher quelles larmes, quelles mares, quelles routes?  
Quels pollens portez-vous vers quelles avides fleurs? . . .

But this "pure lyricism" is one phase of Spire's work, a phase which is not dominant. For instance, there are scattered through all of his volumes small sketches of character which achieve their effect by suggestion (as in *Les Etudiantes*, *Ces Grèves*, *Tu es content!*) *Ces Grèves* is one of those rare poems which illustrate almost perfect marriage of form with content. There is even some description of the central figure herself in the abrupt and light-headed look of the pattern:

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

La jeune femme,  
Le cou assez nu,  
Les seins pas très retenus,  
Et les mollets pas très vêtus .

La jeune femme, sur le sofa,  
De la mousse de chocolat  
Sur la lumière de ses dents  
Et sur le rouge de ses lèvres  
Que pensez-vous de ces grêves ?

Ces grêves, plus de métro!  
Et quels taxis!  
Et quels chauffeurs!  
Et quels pourboires!

Et si les Galéries fermaient!  
Et mes bonnes, s'ils les débauchaient!  
Qui ferait mon lit?  
Mon ménage ?

Et mon mari,  
Et ses amis,  
Quand pourraient-ils mettre leurs habits,  
Et quand m'emmener en vacances  
S'ils les obligent à travailler ?

. . . Ouvrier, que je n'aimais plus guère .

. . . Comme je t'aime cet après-midi !

We might cite numerous examples of varieties of bitterness transcribed in these free-verse lines of Spire's, but there is need here only of indicating broader limits. For example, the mastery with which Spire uses dramatic monolog. There is huge difference between *Rêves Juifs* and *Comprends-tu, petite?* two highly successful dramatic monologs; but the second of the two, richer in subjective

meaning, splendidly illustrates the flexibility of the form in this poet's hands, his ability to sketch in the after-the-war story of an entire social class, his power to evoke the meaning in terms of both human and poetic truth:

Mon père savait le latin,  
Ma mère jouait du piano  
Et faisait des visites.  
Comprends-tu, petite,  
Comprends-tu?

J'avais un précepteur,  
Un cheval,  
Un fusil,  
Un piqueur et des gardes  
Comprends-tu?

Mais j'aimais trop les livres,  
Les coeurs et les yeux tristes—  
Comprends-tu, ma petite?

Nous aimions trop les laïmes,  
Les amants, les vaincus,  
Les passants et les routes .  
Allumons notre feu,  
Epoussetons nos livres,  
Comprends-tu?

Epoussetons nos livres,  
Et brossons nos habits,  
Et cirons nos souliers  
Comprends-tu?

Et cirons nos souliers,  
Et lavons la vaisselle  
Comprends-tu, chère petite,  
Comprends-tu?

We could single out many fine poems which are terrific as

invectives, such as *Ecoute Israel* and a number of the poems in the book *Poèmes Juifs*. But these could hardly be valued for what they are if presented in morsels. Especially *Ecoute Israel*, one of Spire's finest achievements, which is a series of rising climaxes ending on the cry: "Ecoute Israel: Aux armes!" Beneath the lines of these poems rumbles the violent motion of a sea in storm; it is unmistakably the work of one who prefers to leave his poems in their state of raw essence, who will not smooth and refine the primitive, the barbarous in his speech.

But there are poems handled in a gentler manner as well, poems that indict with singing, one might say. Such as *Paix Sociale*, a despairing tale of class-differences in the republic of France; or *Novembre*, *La Poussière*, and others. *Paix Sociale* begins with these lines and carries the same folksong effect throughout, finishing with the first two lines:

Sur la rivière, sur la belle rivière,  
Je flânais, je musais . . .  
Ouvrier, ouvrier,  
Le ciel est clair, les nuages légers,  
Et les peupliers chantent.  
C'est dimanche, c'est dimanche.  
Pourquoi, les jambes pendantes,  
Regardes-tu l'eau s'écouler  
Et moi passer,  
Avec des yeux si desolés?

And there are genre pictures—such as in *Paysanne*, its song of "le travail, le soleil, et la maternité"; such as in the abovementioned *La Poussière*, when it is from the servant's

mouth that the words flow; or such as in the poem *Pogromes*, its analysis of the attitude of the old men:

Laissez-nous! La seule injustice, c'est de mourir!  
Le sourire ambigu de nos lèvres soumises,  
Nos faces humiliées, nos âmes impassibles  
Nous gardent mieux que vous.

And Spire can sum up whole volumes of *systèmes* in devastating little etchings such as *Acacias*:

Acacias, parfumez le soir du jardin!  
Filez, nuages, avec du feu plein vos carrosses!  
Mésanges gourmandes gavez,  
Gavez vos petits de chenilles!  
Pucerons, sucez les rosiers,  
Et, nous, mes amis, des pastilles!  
Jouons aux billes!  
Jouons aux billes!

And there is whimsicality and humor in poems like *C'est la fin des tristes poèmes* in which, after a volume of grief-laden poems, Spire postscripts: "Comme ça m'est égal, ce matin!" Or in *Pruderie*, in which he reprimands himself for "condemning sensual young folk," and adds:

Pensais-tu ainsi, autrefois,  
Lorsque le printemps te chassait par les rues,  
Et te faisait galoper vers l'amour,  
Comme une bête en rut?

Quand tu ne pouvais serrer une main  
Sans que ton coeur défaille,  
Ni t'asseoir contre un jeune corps  
Sans que ton corps devienne fou.

Et tu vas boudier, maintenant,  
Et faire fi,



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Et regarder d'un oeil prude  
Ces bouches rouges, ces yeux brillants?  
Venez, chers enfants, accourez!  
Voici des bouquets, des guirlandes,  
Des paroles pour vos chansons!  
De la musique pour vos danses!

And there is the book *Samaël*, a magnificent conception which "studies that strange passion whereof the majority of religions are nourished, which incites to the noblest actions and causes the worst failures: the nostalgia of Paradise, the terrestrial dream of God, of absolute universal happiness." This dramatic poem, a three-act play in vers-libre, far beyond the capacities of our present theatre with its scrupulously clothed Adam and Eve and its three-dimensional settings, illustrates further the variety of uses to which André Spire has put vers-libre—one more domain of poetry in which he has used his wave-like rhythms with perfect mastery.

. . . . .

Whom might we compare him with, relative to this use of free verse? Hardly with Sandburg, whose range, in my opinion, is comparatively small and whose music is usually uncertain. Hardly with Oppenheim, whose music is built on the rudiments of Hebraic poetry. Hardly with the superficial fluency of Amy Lowell or with the increasingly uncertain Fletcher. Few American vers-librists have the instinctive feeling for the music of vers-libre, to give them a sufficient mastery for varied usage. . . . Although Richard Aldington and H. D. seem exceptions. If we would com-

pare any one poet to André Spire, it would most logically be H. D., in reality the only English or American vers-librist who has clearly demonstrated mastery over the instrument. But H. D.'s range is so very limited; she very rarely ventures beyond the bounds of her chosen precinct. And in France, there is only the counterpart of H. D. in the person of Henri de Régnier, an exquisite poet but, once more, a poet hopelessly limited in range.

Perhaps it is because André Spire has written of the panorama of contemporary life that his range is so wide and his music so rich and original. Perhaps it is merely because of the quality of his poetic gift—one which has been appreciated all over Europe, by Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, the Russian poet Balmont, and by poets and critics in Belgium, Italy, Czechoslovakia, etc. Whatever may be the reason, this much remains certain: that Spire has brought vers-libre to an undreamed-of flexibility, richness and range, and has demonstrated its limitless possibilities for poets to come.

*Stanley Burnshaw*

## REVIEWS

### • SERENE AND SECURE

*Outcrop*, by Abbie Huston Evans. Harper & Bros.

This book is an assertion of strength, a quiet declaration of unity and completeness. There is no shouting, no strain or pose, but there is a deep satisfaction, a lyric joy

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

in life, in being one with nature and her processes. The last two stanzas of *Windfalls* are an epitome of the book:

Out whirled my heart and down the gale,  
Like one more leaf set free to sail  
I was a note like A or G  
In a rising harmony;  
“*In this universe I fit*”—  
I never was so sure of it!  
All my tangled lines slid free  
And lay parallel in me.

“O golden world, you change and fly,  
And so do I—and so do I!  
At one beneath, too deep to mark,  
Our roots go twining in the dark;  
And all in one we slip, we move  
Together down this shaping groove  
Toward that hid Outlet, that sure Whole,  
That shall include us, clod and soul!”

Again and again we hear details of this harmony, asserted always with a close compactness, in figures that surprise and delight with their keen accuracy—like the *solder* simile in this sonnet *Hill-born*, which we quote as another proof of the poet's oneness with the rocky earth she springs from:

Back to this mold, this matrix whence I came,  
I come again. Like solder where it spills,  
My being hardened in among these hills  
When God took off my metal from the flame  
And poured me out like silver; presently,  
My outline fixed forever, I was I,  
Stamped by this rocky corner like a die,  
Shaped by these five hills and this edge of sea.

Oh, strange how hills and man's heart interlock  
Inveterately—how rock can bestow  
Its contour on his spirit quick within!  
Yet so it is: hill-men have always been  
Like nuggets fashioned by their chinks, or snow  
Packed in the star-like crevice of a rock.

There is not much to say about poems like these except that they are fresh and shining and beautiful—a revelation of joy in a spirit absolute and secure. We have many poets in doubt of themselves, their neighbors, their age and all its works and aims and gods; their poems have rung the changes, with more or less justice, on themes of despair and disintegration, or at best of a clouded and fitful hope. So it is a relief to find here a singer as incapable of doubt as a thrush, as sturdy in flight, as sure of her way, as forthright and musical in her song. It is faith in life that moves her, in the earth and the sky, in day and night and trees and rocks and all primal things; and her adequate art expresses this firm delight as freshly as if the song had never been sung before—like each morning coming to earth as if it were the first, with its own new colors and dews and winds.

We must refer our readers to the book, for we cannot repeat here a fraction of the poems I have starred in reading it. I should like to quote *Past Midnight*, with its lovely fourth quatrain:

And just above the edge the dying moon  
Hung with a planet by it, like to swoon,  
Dripping with beauty, fresh-washed from the sea.  
(—Oh that alone was sight enough for me!)

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

And one is arrested also by *I am Broken of my Rest*, *The Bird-tree*, *A Prayer for Less*—many others which express ecstatic delight in nature. But nature is not this poet's only subject; the same sturdiness, strength of fibre, is manifest in her acceptance of life. There is a disciplined sternness in such poems as *Says Life of Youth*, *The Servant of the Prophet*, *Give Him a Stone*, *The Vine*, *Hunger*, and this brief one, *Woman*:

Be tender of her shyness; have a care—  
Such beauty may not stay.  
Be one who breaks out of a path to spare  
A cobweb in the way.

Be harsh as granite with her granite edges;  
Here you may meet as foes.  
Granite is granite—beat on her with sledges.  
She can endure your blows.

And it is interesting to note, in *The Trend*, that a far faint echo of the Einstein projection of thought into space may reach a young poet's mind and be converted into a symbol.

We might say more, but the best notice of fine lyrics is quotation, and already we have quoted more than the law allows. This book has been distributed to the Poetry Clan, and we recommend it to all who love, in lyric poetry, simplicity, a singing rhythm, emotional intensity, and an imagination which seizes beauty and gives it vivid and memorable form.

H. M.

ANTI-PURITAN

*The Joy Ride and Other Poems*, by Warren Gilbert. Boni & Liveright.

•We may as well begin by admitting that this poet lacks taste. But this is not so damning as it might be, for he has something else. That "else" has no relation to fine writing, though it is not incompatible with it. Some classics have it, some lack it, but it is a virtue in itself, and one many authors would give much to possess. I refer to "breathlessness", narrative interest. We shall have to admit that it is rather rare in poetry, and when I say that Mr. Gilbert has it I am speaking relatively, of course. I do not claim that his poems ever read like dime novels; nor has he this quality in all his work. Some is downright dull, even when we feel he had intended the opposite effect. But I do feel that certain of his poems have rather more "story interest" than is usual, and one springing not from a story technique of any sort but solely from emotional force. *Joy Ride*, *Kind Nurse* with its poignancy, *Gertrude* with its eccentric humor, hold the interest and race along.

As for his poetic gift, it is there, peeping out both in his skilled management of extremely free verse, and in his more lyrical poems. •But it is likely to be under-rated because of the doggerel which he has included, apparently only to be offensive.

For this man cannot resist the temptation to shock. He must vent his ire at the puritans even at the cost of art. When have we met a poet so obsessed by the church-going

gossips, by the smugly righteous evil-doers, by the oppressors of Beauty and Life? Or when have we met a poet more obsessed by God? Sometimes derision of other people's God, sometimes a fumbling attempt to define his own, sometimes a statement of different interpretations, or possible substitutes, but always, God, God.

This coincidence suggests to the reader an interpretation as hackneyed as it may be unwelcome to the enemy of puritanism. Usually a poet is able to reconcile himself to his neighbors, if only by ignoring them; but to Mr. Gilbert the conventional self-righteous mediocre attitude is a torture from which he cannot escape. It hedges him in and stifles him; he must strike out or die. So we are moved to ask if this may not be because the enemy is within. There is a familiar fanaticism in such hatred. As someone said about Amy Lowell, the rebel against puritanism is the truest puritan. For the puritan's virtues—pride, strength of will and inability to compromise—create a hostility of temperament which makes him a rebel in all ages.

If this is the case with Mr. Gilbert it cannot be helped; we must respect him for his conscientious effort to lean backwards. But I cannot like moralizing doggerel, even when it purports to be immoralizing. The tone and quality, not the content, is what makes the didactic poem offensive. Also the rhymed couplet—formal and facile, and trailing association back to Pope—is not a good vehicle for him. His “damns” explode strangely in it,

though they are perhaps indispensable in his modernistic use of free verse. He is all right when he puts his muse in trousers. He is also all right when for a few minutes he allows himself to be lyrical, as in parts of *Noel Joyeux*, or the following from *The Year*:

Seedtime, summer and harvest  
Over and over again,  
And the little children changing  
Into hard-faced women and men.  
Yellow corn in the corn-cribs,  
White spuds in the bin,  
And red sweet apples running  
To cider sweet and thin.

Twelve months to the year,  
Seventy years to the life,  
And the upshot merely an old gray man  
And his old gray wife.

Here is a sample of his other style, his very freest verse:

When she got in she crossed her legs  
and pressed a tantalizing hoof against  
my gas and emergency right ankle.  
I made no plans, but thought I to myself,  
*By God, You'll Walk Back Then.*

A fragment of course does scant justice to a narrative of which the merit is largely in its movement. In all, a lively book, with food in it both for thought and for mirth.

*Margery Mansfield*



A PRIZE POEM

*The City*, by Ruth Manning Sanders. The Dial Press.

The Blindman Prize poem for 1927 is an allegory which tells of the founding by Christ of an earthly city as a new citadel of revelation. The story turns on the advent of the Savior among men, their response to his divinity, and in particular on the experiences of his prophet (here an old village crone called Moll) in proclaiming and fulfilling the favor of God. Though even she falls into the customary trap of human weakness, humility wins her pardon and beatification in the end.

Mrs. Manning Sanders has turned to ballad elements for her treatment of this theme. Her language, forms, rhythms, characters, and images all refer to the primitive spirit in poetry. She has not tried to modify these devices unduly or convert them, by stylization, to her own exclusive terms. Instead she has trusted to the accuracy of her historical sense in reviving the true spirit of the early narratives. She is probably aware of the far too many failures in recent poetry which have been due to ignorance of the way in which the story poem must be handled in order to serve as a model for the modern outlook with its widely different intention and feeling. She has used her materials with great care and has introduced into a plan which is open to all the dangers of imitative tedium a considerable variety of form. She has made use of an interesting contrast between the naïve pictorial values of her legend and the complicated machinery of

modern life—its clubs, typewriters, hotels, corporation meetings, etc.

But when this poet has been granted an undeniable skill in expanding her general scheme, and a creative industry not wholly dependent on trite imitation and amusing anachronism, she has received a considerable justice. For, in spite of her winning descriptions, no strong inevitable idea is apparent behind her pictures of wood and evening and town, and of the hills with their song:

Cold the time, heavy our grief,  
The wind has stripped both bud and leaf.  
We wait and we are dark of song,  
We bow before our ancient wrong.

The characters appear and are forgotten because they crowd the picture with pale undefined features. The setting of the city falls short of clear memorable beauty. The sympathy and charm in the poet's attitude are obscured by her failure to discipline her individual lines or her work as a whole by patient selection and highly reduced emotion. Some of her sections are fixed with a clear narrative beauty, as in the opening pages of the book:

The woman in that glade knelt still as stone,  
Staring at trees as they were things unknown.

But where she tries to combine her elements and motives into a more intricate scheme—as in *Book VII*—the effect is insecure, confusing:

For though his muddled wits can scarcely tell  
If it were Jesus or some millionaire

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Who told him of a town where he might dwell  
And of a peace he should not find elsewhere—  
'Tis sure that Jesus said, "One thing you lack,  
Go where you will, to me you must come back."

In such a state of creative uncertainty the tale works itself out, and the result is another long poem whose separate merits do not fuse into the solid unity required for real achievement.

*Morton Dauwen Zabel*

### FROM A SMALL PLACE

*Songs of Infancy and Other Poems*, by Mary Britton Miller.  
Macmillan Co.

A true talent is manifest in this volume, but one very restricted in range of rhythm and subject. The title of the book is misleading, in that the "songs of infancy" which fill almost the first half are, in effect, neither the utterances of a child nor grown-up poems about a child or childhood; they are the meditations of an adult behind a child's mask—a permissible pose but one which, of course, never deceives. The following poem is typical; no one could ever mistake its *I* for the voice of a child:

Love comes slowly,  
Like a tide,  
Gently lifting up  
Inside.

And when its quiet tides  
Are full  
I feel so good  
And beautiful.

But hatred comes  
Like sudden pain,  
That burns me up  
In its red flame;  
  
And when its fires  
Fill my mood  
I see the world  
All bathed in blood.

Contrast this with any of the unmistakable child-poems in Dorothy Aldis' *Everything and Anything!*

This staccato movement in short two-measure lines seems to be Miss Miller's favorite rhythm. She uses it in three-fifths of the *Infancy* poems, and frequently in the confessedly adult section, where a line longer than trimeter, or any approach to a legato movement, is a rare exception. Thus the poet's rhythmic range is very narrow; piquant in a poem or two, it becomes monotonous in a volume.

Also her vision is restricted. She sees a few things clearly—a few rather slight details of nature and life. But she is never the first poet to see them, never a discoverer. Her emotions have been the theme of other poets; she is no more original in subject than in style. Within very narrow bounds, however, she is simple and genuine. The following poem, untitled like most of them, is one of the best in the book, presenting an appealing mood out of a walled-in life of quiet and gentle reticence:

My heart shall never weep  
For lonely things and proud—  
Cliffs that withstand the flood,

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Rocks that receive the wave,  
Men who speak not aloud.  
If I could silence keep,  
Honouring the poignant mood,  
Letting the foolish rave,  
I should be proud.

H. M.

### A MOUNTAIN FOLK PLAY

*The Gobbler of God*, by Percy Mackaye. Longmans, Green & Co.

Since he went to the hinterland of the Appalachian mountains to find not only new material but also, in the folk speech of the mountaineer, a new literary language, Percy Mackaye has gained a new lease on life as a writer. Always rather skilful in handling the material of popular legend (as *The Scarecrow* and *Dog Town Common* showed), he has apparently found that a more dignified and flexible character may be asserted by examining the content of life and legend than by filling commissions for civic pageants or elaborate festival allegories. It is consequently with a fresh interest that one opens his later books.

The Kentucky mountains offer a province in American life which has not been inquired into very closely. Charles Egbert Craddock showed some alertness to the call of her native regions in the nineteenth century; more recently several good plays have come from Lulu Vollmer, Thatcher Hughes, and Paul Green. It is not only a field rich in character and dramatic values: it is also notable for the

real eloquence of its vulgar speech, the ingenious variety and allegory of its fables, the bravery and wit of its physical life, and the all-pervading spell of its spiritual forces. Probably Mr. Mackaye is not the man to make the most of these, for here an imaginative alacrity and a verbal discrimination of the surest kind are needed. But now that the philologist has tackled the obscurities of American speech-ways, and the sociologist has invaded the most secret Kentucky hills, the poet feels an imperative call to use this same life and language. Mr. Mackaye has had the advantage of arriving early, and though his project of plays and narratives shows a disconcerting thoroughness and self-confidence, he has on the whole written with a renewed skill. *This Fine Pretty World* made effective use of back-hill idiom, though it lacked the full structure of a play; and *Tall Tales from the Kentucky Mountains* seized upon the rapid play of folk fantasy and the slow vigor of common wit.

*The Gobbler of God* must not be considered apart from these other works, or from the series of five new books—of which it is the first—announced by the publishers. Indeed, as an independent poem it shows a tentative quality, which makes a single judgment harsher than a comparison with its fellows. However, it testifies to the rich extent of these upland tales and myths, and there is in the poem a strong magic which sputters and gleams through the mixture of mountaineer and negro dialects out of which its story of fierce love and instincts is composed. Sometimes

the natural stress of the homely circumstances achieves the large tragic force the author tries so urgently to secure. This is best realized in the character of Old Isaac Vale, breaking the hills and winning for his eight lank sons a highland dominion; and there is a complementary fantasy embodied in the negro sprite of the stream, Lou-Elly-Lou. In Proud Margery and her lover, Arvel McNight, a disappointing development takes place, and along with the general thinning-out of interest in the dramatic content, there is a perceptible heaviness in the poetry. The strange divinity of the Gobblers also remains too obscure and far-fetched. Altogether *The Gobbler of God* makes one acknowledge that Mr. Mackaye's researches are not likely to become transformed into vital works of art, that the author's zeal for discovery has not gone hand in hand with creative authority.

*Morton Dauwen Zabel*

## NEWS NOTES

We call the attention of our readers to the paragraphs about prizes on page ii of the index section of Volume XXXII accompanying this number. In November we shall have the pleasure of awarding seven prizes instead of the usual four, to the aggregate value of \$1200 instead of the usual \$500; the largest being an Award of Honor of \$500 to "some poet of distinction or distinguished promise."

The judges of the Kathryn Irene Glascock Memorial poetry contest announce that the prize for this year has been won by Tom Prideaux, Yale University, '30. This prize of \$100 is offered by Colonel and Mrs. Glascock, of Culver, Indiana, together with the *Mt. Holyoke College News*, in memory of their daughter, a young poet of unusual promise who died in 1923 soon after her graduation from Mt. Holyoke. Certain

colleges are invited to send poets, and the prize is awarded after the poets have read their own work before the judges. This year Léonie Adams, Henry S. Canby and Wilbert Snow acted as judges.

The minor poet is given his due at last in the following comment from the *London Times*:

"One reflection which an acquaintance with English verse suggests is that minor poetry is a most desirable branch of writing, and that those who content themselves with the hope of achieving it obtain their reward and justify their good sense. Powerful universalities, from epic to elegy, only come into our world through a rare combination of gift and experience; but graceful and vivid annotations of particular thought in sensitive meter are the privilege of many talented men and women."

Richard Eberhart writes us from the University of Cambridge, where he has been a student since October. "I have a tutoring job in Nottingham for a month, but just this morning a letter came hinting at a job for me on board a ship for Rangoon. Last week-end I lived like Byron, minus a club-foot and mistresses, at a great estate near Cambridge. But all English country-houses are so clipped, trimmed, butlered, polished and much-ado'd, that one succumbs to a kind of silk-textured luxury, paddles about on an artificial lake among the swans and Chinese geese and moor-hens, watches the planted trout, three pounds long, idle in their amber world at the mill-race, and takes the hot sun casually. He is indeed so full of winy pleasure that no quick perception is possible. Living in Cambridge, even for a year, leads one subtly into that detachment and impersonal-ness that sees all things from a long perspective and poetry through too polished lenses. It sets up a high standard, and sheds the leaden light of doubt on modern extravagance and fancying in verse."

The Macmillan Company are publishing three books by Vachel Lindsay this fall: Thorndyke's *Selections from Lindsay*, a book of Lindsay's *Children's Poems* illustrated by George Mather Richards, and *The Litany of Washington Street*, a volume of more or less political essays. The Viking Press announces the early publication of William Ellery Leonard's collected poems under the title *A Son of Earth*; also a new novel by Elizabeth Madox Roberts and an historical romance by Ford Madox Ford.

The National League of American Pen Women has purchased the home of the late Emma D. Southworth to serve as its permanent headquarters.



The house is on a high bluff overlooking the Potomac. All those who contribute ten dollars or more are entitled to have their names enrolled in the memorial room. Mrs. Southworth may be vaguely, but quite sufficiently remembered for about sixty ultra-sentimental novels of the last century. But no doubt she earned enough thereby to have left a stately mansion.

The Bards, an organization of the poets of Grand Rapids, Michigan, send us their calendar for 1927-28, which presents an ambitious and interesting program of lectures and contests. A prize contest, an anthology of the work of the members, and a thorough study of contemporary American poets are features of their year's work.

John Masfield's play *The Coming of Christ* has been recently presented with beautiful effect in Canterbury Cathedral. A huge audience saw the production while hundreds more were turned away at the door.

A Spokane (Washington) contributor writes: "Like my little daughter, Spokane is outgrowing her shoes, or rather moccasins. The book-sales, the extraordinary popularity of lectures, the music, poetry and story-writing contests with thousands of entries, the study and extension groups crowded to the doors, are very interesting to watch. It is as if the seeds had been lying in the ground all the time and a spiritual April had suddenly set them all growing."

Prices of vanity publishers seem to be rising. The Stratford Company of Boston are charging \$2.50 per copy for the privilege of seeing one poem printed in their *Contemporary Poets* anthology. Each poet represented is required to buy ten copies at the above rate. Many are the schemes of these publishers for squeezing the shy dollar out of the poet's pocket. Few advertise them so shamelessly as Dean & Co. of New York, who describe a certain anthology which they publish as "listing every prominent American poet who ever lived." To get into this anthology among all those "prominent poets" you have only to send in your poem along with a check to pay for copies of the book. The publisher kindly instructs you as follows: "Those sending poems for publication are expected to subscribe to at least three copies, while those sending only autobiographic sketches may subscribe to only one copy." We note also that the Boston veteran Richard G. Badger is energetically renewing his thirty-year-old campaign for the publication of books by poets young and innocent enough to pay his price.

Mr. H. L. Davis, of The Dalles, Oregon, requires no introduction to our readers. His first group, *Primapara*, brought him the Levinson Prize in 1919, and since then he has appeared often in both our verse and prose sections, and in other magazines. We are eager for a book from him which shall give more permanent form to his spacious, large-spirited pastorals of the West.

Mr. Edgar Lee Masters, since the appearance of his *Two Poems* in POETRY for June, has published, through D. Appleton & Co., *Jack Kelso: A Dramatic Poem*.

A note on Mrs. Seiffert, of Moline, Ill., may be found in our April number, which opened with her dialogue, *Noah's Ark*.

Mr. Robert Roe also appeared in April, with *Three Poems*. He is still living in Monterey, Cal.

Mr. Robert Hillyer, of Pomfret, Conn., is the author of a number of books of verse, the latest being *The Seventh Hill* (Viking Press). In September he will join the Harvard faculty as instructor in creative writing, including poetry.

Miss Margery Mansfield, formerly Margery Swett (a change not due to marriage), was business manager of POETRY until she removed three years ago to New York, where she has been doing free-lance work.

Virginia Moore (now Mrs. Louis Untermeyer), who has been living of late in London, is the author of *Not Poppy* (Harcourt, Brace & Co.); and in October the same publishers will issue her second book of verse, *Sweet Water and Bitter*.

Mary Brinker Post (Mrs. Harry G.), of Spokane, Wash., received a local prize this year in a poetry contest conducted by the Spokane *Chronicle*.

Mrs. Effie Alger Allen, of Westboro, Wis., has appeared in POETRY and other magazines.

Mr. Le Baron Cooke, of Boston, has also contributed verse to various magazines, besides writing short stories, feature articles and plays.

The other seven poets of this number are new to our readers, and their literary biographies are brief:

Grace Baer Hollowell (Mrs. A. L. H.), of South Bend, Ind., has appeared in *The Forge* and a few other magazines.

Mr. Leonard Hinton is now on the staff of the *Journal* in Beaumont, Texas. He confesses: "I have been logger, miner, sailor, fisherman,

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Salvation Army singer, vaudevillian, editorial writer, city editor and hobo. And there are a lot of occupations I haven't got around to yet."

Mr. Julius M. Nolte was born in Duluth, Minn., where he still lives, engaged in real estate and advertising. He was in the air service during the War.

Elizabeth Morrow (Mrs. Dwight M.) is now residing in the City of Mexico, where her husband is the Ambassador from the United States.

Miss Juanita Turner, of San Francisco, and Miss Frances Stevens, of Chicago, are undergraduates at the universities of California and Chicago.

Miss Ellen Borden is a young Chicago poet.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

*Lost Address*, by Chard Powers Smith. Houghton Mifflin Co.

*In Praise of Pain*, by Ruth Widen. Parnassus, N. Y.

*Marble Satyr*, by Josephine Boylan. Knickerbocker Press, N. Y.

*La Fontaine's Fables*, by Radcliffe Carter. Oxford University Press.

*To One in Heaven*, by Wilbur Underwood. Elkin Mathews & Marrot, London.

*Poems*, by Clarence Dan Blachly. Washington College Press, Washington.

*Silver Bugles of the Moon*, by Anna Louise Barney. Four Seas Co.

*Sketches of the Out-of-doors*, by Willis Hudspeth. Colonial Press, Omaha.

"*Musings o' Mine*," by Ernest Hyett. Stratford Company.

#### ANTHOLOGIES:

*The Turquoise Trail: An Anthology of New Mexico Poetry*. Compiled by Alice Corbin Henderson. Houghton Mifflin Co.

*Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Américaine*, par Eugene Jolas. Simon Kra, Paris.

*Contemporaries*, ed. by Roland Kampmeier. Kruse Pub. Co., Vinton, Iowa.

#### PROSE:

*The Island of Captain Sparrow*, by S. Fowler Wright. Cosmopolitan Book Corp.

*The Happy Mountain*, by Maristan Chapman. Viking Press.

WE take pleasure in announcing the importation of a volume of poetry by a distinguished English poet who has also won fame as a novelist.

# P O E M S

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*and*

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—THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (*London*).

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